



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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Rep. Kind Calls on Congress to Help Wisconsin Families with Soaring Gas Prices, Rising Home Heating Costs *Second Energy Bill Offers Little Relief to Working Families*

Washington, D.C. – The House of Representatives passed a second consecutive energy bill today that fails to address soaring gas prices and rising home heating costs. Rep. Kind voted against the bill and called on the Administration and Congress to support an energy policy that helps American consumers by stopping price gouging and ending the massive subsidies to oil companies at the expense of consumers.

Kind also called for greater energy cost relief to low-income families eligible for assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the federal block grant program that allocates funds to states to operate energy assistance programs for low-income households.

“The time is long overdue for an energy policy that helps families with skyrocketing costs and provides relief for those who are struggling to make ends meet,” said Rep. Kind. “Right now, early in the fall season, we are talking about the price at the pump, but pretty soon it’s going to be the cost of home heating that is going to have an impact on the budgets of Wisconsin’s families.”

Rep. Kind, a strong supporter of the LIHEAP, called on Congress to increase funding for the program and to expand access to eligible households. Kind and 57 other Members from cold winter states sent a letter to President Bush last month urging the Administration to provide an additional \$900 million in emergency LIHEAP assistance to at least maintain the program’s 2004 purchasing power. A shortage of LIHEAP funds has resulted in denied assistance to 70 percent of Wisconsin’s 500,000 eligible families. *[Analysis: LIHEAP Recipients as a Percentage of Eligible Households (FY2005), Estimated National Energy Assistance Directors Association]*

“I know how important fuel assistance is to many families who are working hard to make ends meet and to seniors who are living on fixed incomes. As one of the coldest states in the country, Wisconsin is a large consumer of energy, and additional funds would help mitigate the costs of heating Wisconsin homes in the winter,” said Rep. Kind. “As we prepare for another Wisconsin winter amid forecasts of rising energy costs, we need to ensure that energy assistance is provided for those who need it.”

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According to the National Energy Assistance Survey report, in fiscal year 2005 the typical household spent an average of 14 percent of their annual income on residential energy. This year, with record high gas prices and no relief in sight, energy bills are expected to increase by approximately 71 percent.

“Since 2001, home heating oil costs have nearly tripled, and natural gas costs have more than doubled, nearing crisis levels for homeowners,” said Kind. “With earnings for the oil industry expected to jump 73 percent next quarter, the oil and gas industry doesn’t need any more help – it’s the American people who need real relief at the gas pump and with their home heating costs.”